ABSTRACT

A method and apparatus are disclosed for recommending items of interest to a user, such as television program recommendations, before a viewing history or purchase history of the user is available. A third party viewing or purchase history is processed to generate stereotype profiles that reflect the typical patterns of items selected by representative viewers. A user can select the most relevant stereotype(s) from the generated stereotype profiles and thereby initialize his or her profile with the items that are closest to his or her own interests. A clustering routine partitions the third party viewing or purchase history (the data set) into clusters, such that points (e.g., television programs) in one cluster are closer to the mean of that cluster than any other cluster. A distance computation routine evaluates the closeness of a television program to each cluster based on the distance between a given television program and the mean of a given cluster.

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